

# MEDIA COVERAGE OF MINE DISASTERS IN UTAH

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HOW THE MEDIA COVERAGE HAS CHANGED OVER TIME IN COVERING THE DEATHS OF MEN IN THIS ALREADY DANGEROUS LINE OF WORK.



# IS UTAH REALLY A MINING STATE?

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- The act of mining has been active in the region ever since the Spanish arrived. These were said to be done to find the legendary gold that the Aztecs were to have left in the region.
- “Almost immediately after the new immigrants arrived in the Salt Lake area, they realized the (importance) of mining in terms of their prosperity and comfort.”
- One of the first finds were mining Salt, then Coal, then nonferrous metals (Iron, silver, copper, lead, gold and zinc).
- The find was expanded on by soldiers from California and Nevada in the 1860's.



# THE ECONOMIC BOOM OF MINING IN UTAH.

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## COAL MINING

• Tons	Value
• 1890-318,159	\$552,000
• 1900-1,147,027	\$1,447,750
• 1910-2,517,809	\$4,224,556
• 1920-6,005,199	\$19,350,000
• 1930-4,257,541	\$10,515,000
• 1940-6,669,896	\$32,050,000
• 1975-6,961,000	\$137,650,000

## METAL MINING

• Short Tons	Value
• 1890-503,300	\$157,000
• 1905-28,649,000	\$8,938,500
• 1910-63,798,500	\$16,204,800
• 1917-143,337,100	\$67,342,000
• 1930-90,263,200	\$23,468,400
• 1943-323,989,000	\$84,237,100
• 1970-295,738,000	\$341,282,000



# WHICH TYPE OF MINING RECEIVED MORE ATTENTION IN THE STATE?

Beginning when the earliest Industrial Commission Reports are available, the majority of the attention and prestige seems to have been given to the Coal Industry.

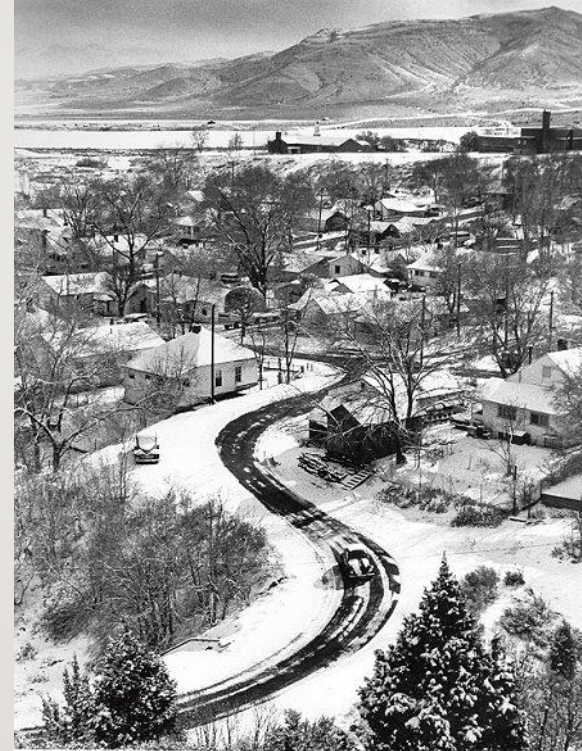
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Even though the Metal mines produced nearly double the revenue of the Coal mines we still had more of the importance given to Coal.

Slowly the Metal Mines received less and less attention, almost as if their numbers are left out on purpose.

Eventually the number dead is all that was given. The Coal mines received nearly 10 pages of information.

The last bit of info for the Metal mines were the number dead per 2 year period.



# WHAT MAKES A MINING ACCIDENT A “DISASTER”?

- According to the Utah state Archives and the records of the CDC, the minimum loss of life that is needed to be considered a disaster is 5. While there have been accidents that happened above and below ground, if these weren't a direct danger from mining, they are not listed.





# MEDIA COVERAGE OF MINING DISASTERS.

- In May of 1900 the small yet important town of Scofield, received a shock when mine no. 4 exploded around 10 am.
- 200 men died in the explosion.
- The largest mining disaster in the United States at the time.
- This lead to changes in Coal mining nationwide.
- Mines began training search and rescue teams in the event of fires and explosions.



# THE PEOPLE AFFECTED.

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This was a diverse group of men. These were not all the “throw away” rednecks that are stereotypical of coal mining.

- Approx.. 144 single men. (This means that many of these men had no families to rely on them and their income.)
- 61 men from Finland (the largest immigrant group)
- 131 “local” boys from the state of Utah.
- Other groups that were represented were those from the British Isles.

# MEDIA ATTENTION ON SCOFIELD UTAH

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# THE NEWSPAPERS TALKED ABOUT THIS STATEWIDE!

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- The Park Record (Park City Utah)
- Ogden Standard Examiner
- Manti Messenger
- Intermountain Catholic
- Deseret Evening News

# THE CASTLE GATE DISASTER

## (1924)

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- This was a coal mine also in central Utah. This particular town housed a much more diverse population than Scofield.
- Many peoples from all over the world. From Asia, Europe, Australia, African American, as well as others from the States.
- One man survived the Scofield Mine Disaster, just to die in this one 24 years later at 73.
- Ms. George Shurtliff lost her first husband in Scofield, and lost her second in Castle Gate.



# WHO DIED IN THIS DISASTER?

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- 172 men died in Mine Number Two.

- 76 Americans
- 2 African Americans
- 49 Greeks
- 22 Italians
- 8 Japanese
- 7 English
- 6 Austrians (Yugoslavs)

- 2 Scotch
- 1 Belgian

- These men left behind families. With a total 417 dependents that were left behind. With an average of a little less than 2.5 children per family, that took a HUGE toll on the town.



# CASTLE GATE MINERS

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John Psaroudakis and Joseph Sargetakis, both miners from Crete, at the Castle Gate Mine #2 shortly before Joseph was killed in the explosion.



## CASTLE GATE ORPHANS.

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Children orphaned by the  
Castle Gate mine  
explosion.









## ALSO REPORTED ACROSS THE STATE.

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- Iron County Recorder
- Millard County Progress
- The Press Bulletin
- Beaver County News
- Beaver/Weekly Press
- Box Elder News
- Davis County Clipper
- Park Record

# LARK UTAH

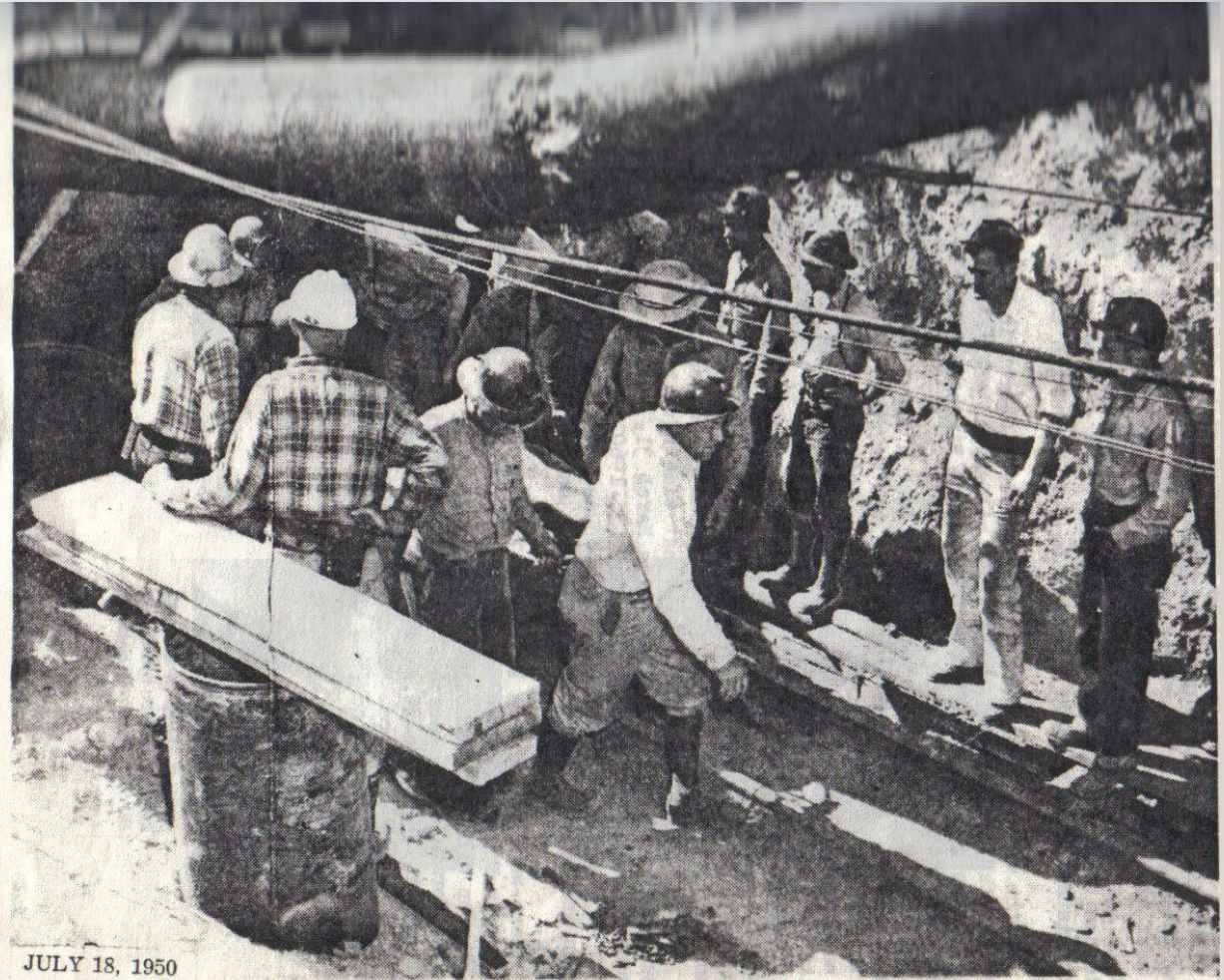
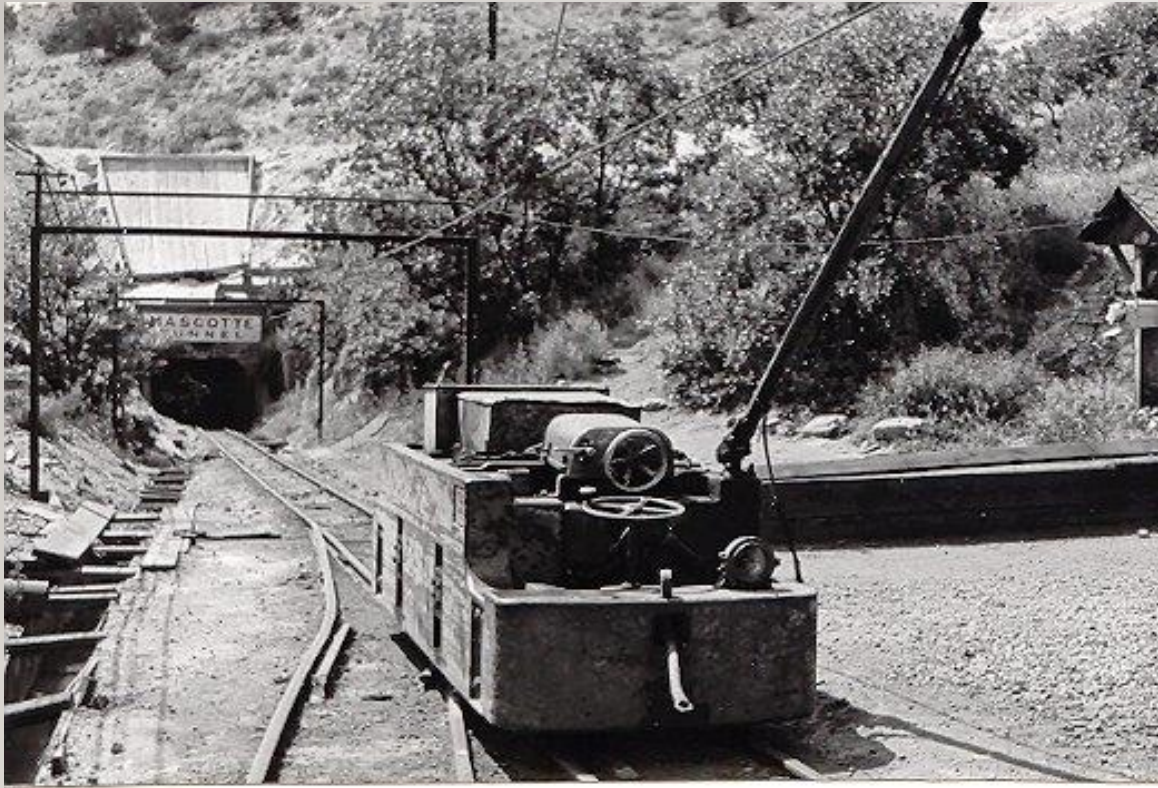
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- Where is Lark, Utah?
- Right at the mouth of Bingham Canyon.
- When the mine workers went on strike for better wages, the mine shut down on July 1, 1950.
- July 16, 1950... **disaster struck.**



# LARK UTAH.



JULY 18, 1950

Grim miners stand by as others carry the blanket-covered body of Horace Martin Seal, 59, from the Mascotte tunnel at Lark. Overhead

is huge metal tube which carried precious air into smoke filled pit. Two are known dead. (Photo by Roy S. Jackson, Tribune-Telegram.)



# WHAT HAPPENED IN THE MINE?

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- While on strike there was a skeleton crew needed to keep the mine safe.
  - i.e. keeping the water pumps on, oxygen masks working, electrical, etc.
- 5 men went to work that night around 11 pm and around 4 am Leland David Nielson called in to his father-in-law Horace Seal that he saw smoke around the 1000 foot level.
- Horace was at around the 500 foot level of the tunnel.
- By the time the General Foreman for the mine was called, the tunnels were filled with smoke and there had been no word from Leland.
- The transformer for that tunnel was shut off, but the smoke was coming out of the tunnel extremely thick by this time.



# THE RESPONSE

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- Robert Meyerhoffer (an electric foreman), Byron Thomas (the surface foreman for the night), Clyde Augustson (the Asst. Superintendent) went down into the mine via an incline shaft hoping that they could get to the fires source quickly.
- These men went underground around 5 am, and when asked before the went down where Seal was, he had already gone down into the mine to find Nielson.
- In their efforts to close the water doors to keep them from the smoke, both men died of carbon monoxide poisoning within 30 minutes.
- The other three men failed to report within the allotted time given by the foreman and because the smoke continued to pour out they knew that the fire was not contained.
- Then rescue efforts began with the hope that the men got to a air intake tunnel.

# THE AFTERMATH

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- The men that heard the call that morning, came off from their strike, immediately the negotiations stopped and the men wanted to help with the rescue efforts.
- Only 5 men were allowed in the mine at a time, for 2 hours at time as their oxygen only lasted that long.
- On the 18<sup>th</sup> the bodies of Horace Seal and Byron Thomas were found. Near a hoist that seized up due to moisture in the air.
- The bodies of the other three men weren't found for another 3 weeks. Only after the pumping of the water out of the mine resumed. (This part of the mine was near the water level of around 85 feet.)



# MEDIA COVERAGE (WHO COVERED IT)

- The Bingham Bulletin. (the local paper for Bingham Canyon, Lark, and Copperton)
- Nothing in the Tribune.
- Can't find anything in the Deseret News.
- Nothing from the Park Recorder (the Park City mining newspaper)
- Nothing in the Murray Eagle.
- No mention in the Sugar House Bulletin.
- These are the bigger papers in Salt Lake County... and Nothing.
- The only other paper that I found to have reference to this disaster is the Ogden Standard.

# WHAT MAKES THIS DISASTER IMPORTANT?

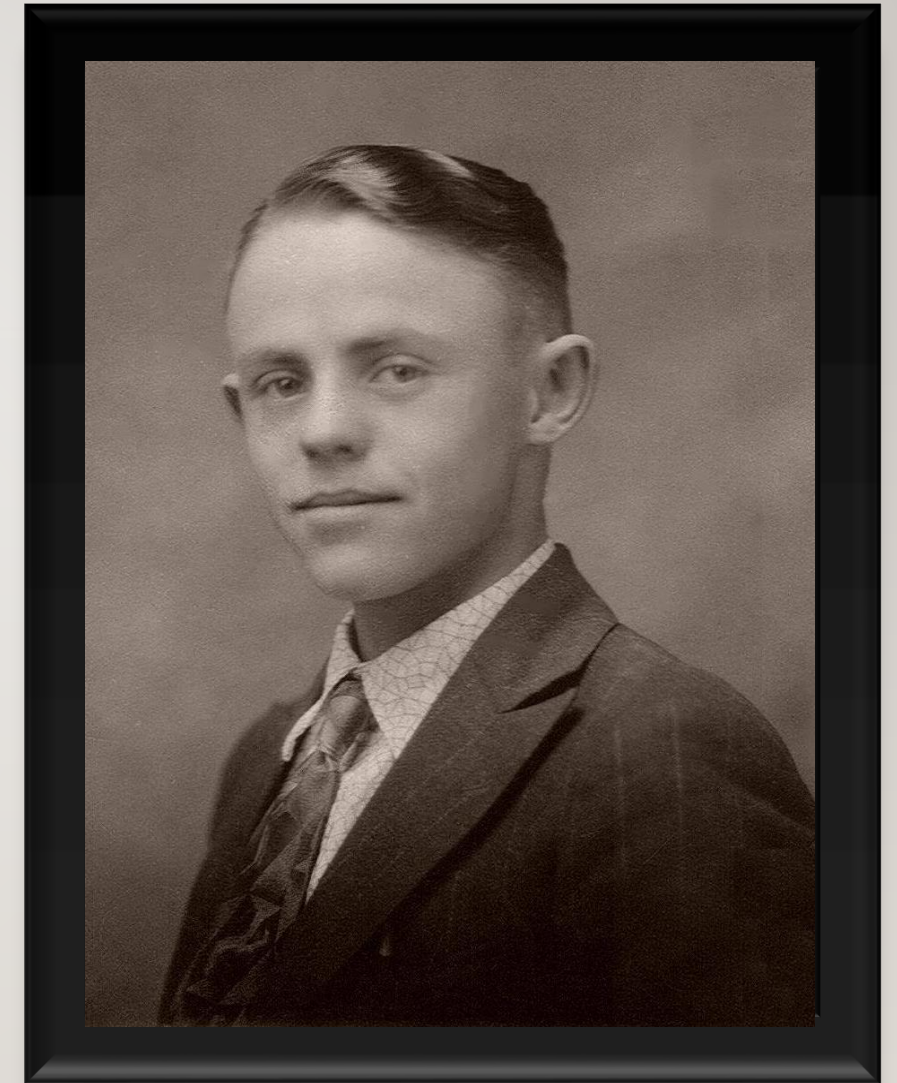
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- For one thing, with what seems to have been the media's mindset that the men were only doing their jobs. "What else did you expect?" seems to be the prevailing train of thought.
- But these men existed. They had families and stories that mean something.
  - Either it means something to Utah's history, the history of mining in the State, or even to the general public in letting them know that these things happened near them.
- Most people have no idea that Lark even existed.
- While this is a continuing issue, we see it hit hardest here with this on in 1950. We have more coverage and information about later disasters.
- Now, let's quickly meet the men who lost their lives that day. (Put a face to this.)



# LELAND DAVID NIELSEN

- The miner who was in the mine as he was the pump operator that night. He discovered the fire in the mine, and was presumably the first one to have died.
- Born September 10, 1912. He was 38.
- He had lived in Lark for 14 years at the time of the Disaster.
- His wife was Jessie Seal Nielsen, daughter of Horace Seal.
- Jessie was pregnant at the time. She gave birth to Marty Nielsen on Jan. 31, 1951. Marty lost his father and grandfather in the accident.





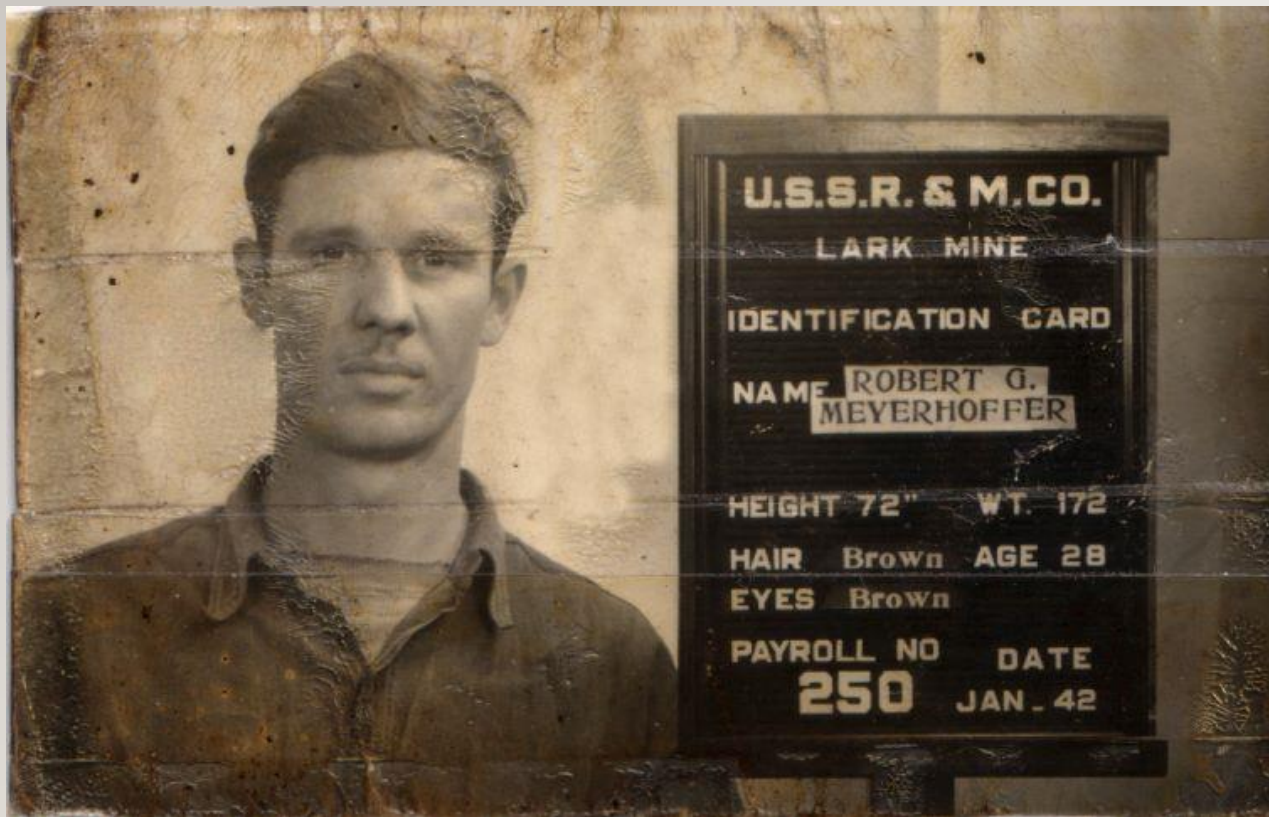
# HORACE MARTIN SEAL

- This picture is of Horace and his wife Virginia. C.a. 1949.
- Born April 1, 1891. He was 59 years old at the time.
- He was the Hoist operator the night of the fire.
- He was the second man on the scene. Trying to get to Leland.
- There are two different reports as to where he was and what he did first.
  - One says that he was in the mine the whole time and got to Leland immediately.
  - Another says that he came out of the mine to alert others to the situation before disappearing into the mine around 4:30am.



# ROBERT “GORDON” MEYERHOFFER

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- The electric foreman who was called in that night.
- Born in Lark on Feb. 19, 1914. He was 36.
- He and the Asst. Mine Superintendent made it almost to Leland Nielsen in their attempt to rescue him. (They knew this mine the best.)
- Left behind a wife (Melba) and two girls, Jane and Gail.



# GORDON'S PICTURES



Gordon & Benton Boyd



Gordon playing baseball in Lark, UT



July 19, 1950 Gail & Jane



# BYRON GRAY THOMAS

- The Surface Foreman who was called in along with Gordon.
- Died due to Carbon Monoxide poisoning, which takes about 30 minutes to die from.
- Found near Horace Seal near a stuck hoist that may have hampered the rescue.

FEDERAL SECURITY AGENCY PUBLIC HEALTH SERVICE		CERTIFICATE OF DEATH		STATE FILE NO. 50-181318	
BIRTH NO. 148 5 0 0 2 3 3 6		UTAH 6744		REGISTRAR'S NO. 18	
1. PLACE OF DEATH a. COUNTY Salt Lake b. CITY (If outside corporate limits, write RURAL) Lark c. LENGTH OF STAY (If not in hospital or institution, give st. address or loc.) U.S.S.R. & M. Co. Mine		2. USUAL RESIDENCE (Where deceased lived. If institution, write a. STATE Utah b. COUNTY Salt Lake c. CITY (If outside corporate limits, write RURAL) Lark d. STREET ADDRESS none (If rural, give location)			
3. NAME OF DECEASED a. (First) Byron b. (Middle) Gray c. (Last) Thomas		4. DATE OF DEATH Month July Day 16 Year 50		5. SEX Male	
6. COLOR OR RACE White		7. MARRIED, NEVER MARRIED, WIDOWED, DIVORCED (Specify) Married		8. DATE OF BIRTH Month Mar Day 4 Year 04	
9. USUAL OCCUPATION (Give kind of work done most of working life, even if Asst. Master Mechanic)		10. KIND OF BUSINESS OR INDUSTRY Lead Mine		11. BIRTHPLACE (City and State or foreign country) Great Falls, Montana	
12. CITIZEN OF WHAT COUNTRY U.S.		13. FATHER'S NAME William G. Thomas		14. MOTHER'S NAME Clara E. Evvarthen	
15. WAS DECEASED ever in U.S. ARMED FORCES (Yes, no or unknown) (If yes, give war or dates of service) No		16. SOCIAL SECURITY No. 528-05-6142		17. INFORMANT and ADDRESS Dora Brady Thomas	
18. CAUSE OF DEATH Enter only one cause per line for (a), (b), and (c) *This does not mean the mode of dying, such as heart failure, asthma, etc. It means the disease, injury, or complication which caused death. DISEASE OR CONDITION DIRECTLY LEADING TO DEATH* (a) Carbon Monoxide Intoxication ANTECEDENT CAUSES (b) DUE TO (c) DUE TO (c) II. OTHER SIGNIFICANT CONDITIONS Conditions contributing to the death but not related to the disease or condition causing death. 19a. DATE OF OPERATION None 19b. MAJOR FINDINGS OF OPERATION None 20. PLACE OF INJURY (e.g., in or about home, farm, factory, street, office, etc.) USSR Mine 21. HOW DID INJURY OCCUR? While at work Not While at work 22. I HEREBY CERTIFY THAT I ATTENDED THE DECEASED FROM THE CAUSES AND ON THE DATE STATED ABOVE. 23. DATE SIGNED July 18, 1950 24. ADDRESS 457 Main St., Bingham Canyon, Utah 25. FUNERAL DIRECTOR'S SIGNATURE AND ADDRESS R. W. Benson, 176, 305		20. INTERVAL BETWEEN ONSET AND DEATH about 30 minutes		21. HOW DID INJURY OCCUR? On reconnaissance crew at scene of mine fire	
22. I HEREBY CERTIFY THAT I ATTENDED THE DECEASED FROM THE CAUSES AND ON THE DATE STATED ABOVE.		23. DATE SIGNED July 18, 1950		24. ADDRESS 457 Main St., Bingham Canyon, Utah	
25. FUNERAL DIRECTOR'S SIGNATURE AND ADDRESS R. W. Benson, 176, 305		26. NAME OF CEMETERY OR CREMATORY Sandy City, Utah		27. LOCATION (City, town, or county) Sandy, Utah	





# CLYDE AUGUSTSEN

- The Asst. Mine Superintendent.
- Also called in with “Gordon”, and Byron.
- Made contact with Horace, before heading farther down into the mine trying to find Leland.
- Was found near Leland and Byron.
- We can assume that they found Leland, but died trying to escape.
- These three men were found last, as the mine flooded when a door opened trying to vent the mine.

FEDERAL SECURITY AGENCY: PUBLIC HEALTH SERVICE		CERTIFICATE OF DEATH		STATE FILE NO. <b>50-191307</b>
BIRTH NO. <b>049 5 0 0 2 3 2 5</b>		UTAH		REGISTRAR'S NO.
1. PLACE OF DEATH a. COUNTY <b>Salt Lake</b>		2. USUAL RESIDENCE (Where deceased lived. If institution: residence before admission) a. STATE <b>Utah</b> b. COUNTY <b>Salt Lake</b>		
b. CITY (If outside corporate limits, write RURAL) OR TOWN <b>Lark</b>		c. CITY (If outside corporate limits, write RURAL) OR TOWN <b>Lark</b>		
d. FULL NAME OF (If not in hospital or institution, give st. address or loc.) HOSPITAL OR INSTITUTION <b>U S Mine</b>		d. STREET ADDRESS (If rural, give location)		
3. NAME OF DECEASED a. (First) <b>Clyde</b> b. (Middle) <b>Wilson</b> c. (Last) <b>Augustson</b>		4. DATE OF DEATH (Month) (Day) (Year) <b>July 16 1950</b>		
5. SEX <b>male</b> 6. COLOR OR RACE <b>white</b> 7. MARRIED, NEVER MARRIED, WIDOWED, DIVORCED (Specify) <b>widowed</b>		8. DATE OF BIRTH (Month) (Day) (Year) <b>May 5 1909</b>		
10a. USUAL OCCUPATION (Give kind of work done most of working life, even if retired) <b>Mining Engineer</b>		10b. KIND OF BUSINESS OR INDUSTRY <b>U S Mine</b>		
11. BIRTHPLACE (City and State or foreign country) <b>Park City, Utah</b>		12. CITIZEN OF WHAT COUNTRY? <b>U.S.</b>		
13. FATHER'S NAME <b>John Charles Augustson</b>		14. MOTHER'S MAIDEN NAME <b>Lulu Rhoda Wilson</b>		
15. WAS DECEASED ever in U.S. ARMED FORCES (Yes, no, or unknown) <b>none</b>		16. SOCIAL SECURITY NUMBER <b>528-05-3495</b>		
17. INFORMANT and ADDRESS <b>Kenneth P. Augustson</b>		18. CAUSE OF DEATH Enter only one cause per line for (a), (b), and (c) 1. DISEASE OR CONDITION DIRECTLY LEADING TO DEATH (a) <b>Presumable asphyxiation</b> INTERVAL BETWEEN ONSET AND DEATH <b>undetermined</b> ANTECEDENT CAUSES <b>E9162</b> DUE TO (b) _____ DUE TO (c) _____ 2. OTHER SIGNIFICANT CONDITIONS Conditions contributing to the death but not related to the disease or condition causing death. <b>Fire in U. S. S. R. &amp; M. Co. at Lark</b>		
19a. DATE OF OPERATION		19b. MAJOR FINDINGS OF OPERATION		
20a. ACCIDENT (Specify) <b>Suicide Accident</b>		20b. PLACE OF INJURY (e.g., in or about home, factory, street, office, bldg., etc.) <b>Lark Mine</b>		20c. (CITY or TOWN) (COUNTY) (STATE) <b>Lark S. L. Utah</b>
21a. TIME OF INJURY (Month) (Day) (Year) (Hour) (Minute) <b>7.16.50</b>		21b. INJURY OCCURRED While at Work <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Not While at Work <input type="checkbox"/>		
22. I HEREBY CERTIFY THAT I ATTENDED THE DECEASED, FROM ON <b>0</b> 19 <b>1950</b> , AND THAT DEATH OCCURRED <b>undetermined</b>				
23a. SIGNATURE (Degree or title) <b>MB Perry</b>				
24a. BURIAL, CREMATION, REMOVAL (Specify) <b>Removal</b>		24b. DATE <b>8-12-50</b>		24c. NAME OF CEMETERY <b>Salt Lake C</b>
DATE RECD BY LOCAL REG. <b>8-12-50</b>		REGISTRAR'S SIGNATURE <b>Bessie N Perry</b>		





# CANE CREEK, MOAB UTAH

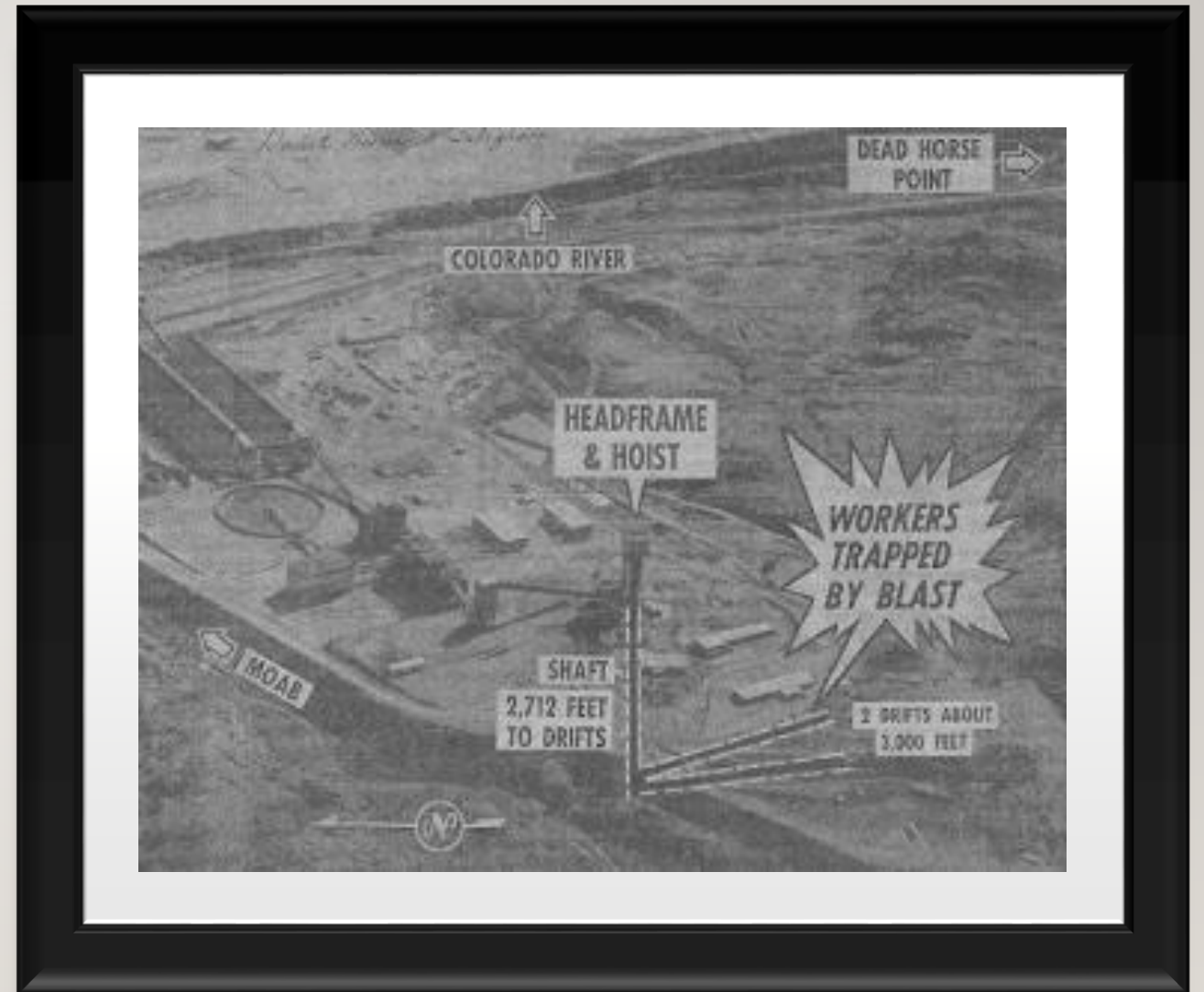
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This disaster occurred Aug. 27, 1963.

This was in one of the deepest mine shafts in North America.

Over 2,500 feet under the earth.

This disaster happened because of a gas explosion in a shop area.



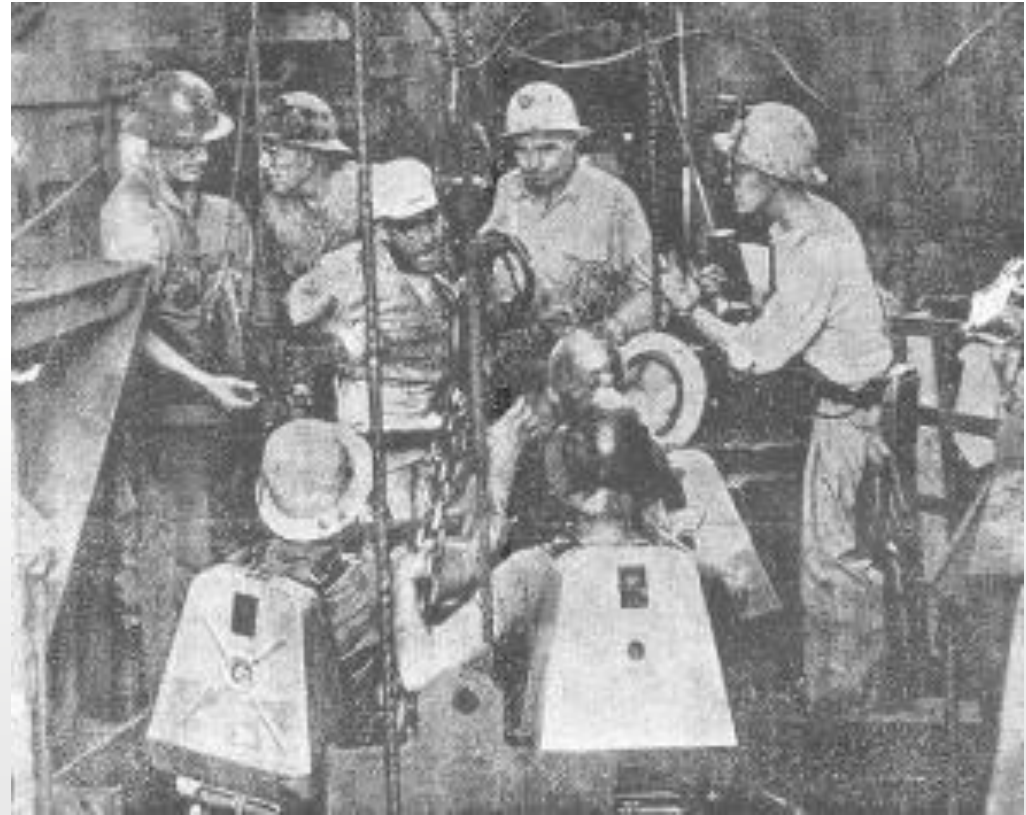


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Here we see 5 rescuers being lowered into the mine.

This one was heavily documented disaster. There were:

- Reports
- Book
- Federal Inquiries, and more.





## MOST RECENTLY

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- As of 2017, one of the most complete books on the Cane Creek Mine Disaster.
- Most of this is from the official reports and from first hand accounts that were taken by the author.
- One point to make, is that people thought that this was important enough to teach and preserve it.

# CRANDELL CREEK MINE DISASTER

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- August 6, 2007 6 men were supposedly killed/or trapped in a rib collapse.
- There was a collapse at the 132 rib section to the 139 rib section.
- This caused an earthquake in the area, a 3.9 on the Richter Scale.
- This was followed by a few other tremors in the area over the next few days.
- This was followed by another collapse that took the lives of 3 of the rescuers. All before the conditions were deemed too hazardous and the mine was sealed and abandoned.





## MEDIA COVERAGE??

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KSL NEWS.

FOX 13

DESERET NEWS

SALT LAKE TRIBUNE

# IS THERE A CONCLUSION??

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From the 1900 Scofield disaster that rocked the nation and the state, to the 2007 Crandell Creek collapse that only seemed to make it into the everyday conversation because people died. The conversation has continued and changed. Mining used to be viewed as a needed thing, something that was needed for the economy to thrive. Now... having lived in the Salt Lake area the mines seemed to have been more of a nuisance than anything. The attitudes have changed, and the coverage has as well.

# CONT.

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But while the means of communication have changed, the fact is this, there are still dozens of men who died who have go unheard of, unknown, and at times, seemingly forgotten by history. These men mattered. All of them. I am not saying that we need to overhaul the education system, or any drastic measures, but something has to be done to memorialize these men who lost their lives supporting their families.



# SOURCES

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